

# CRISIS CONTAINMENT Managing Crises in Positive Ways

Every test successfully met is rewarded by some growth in intuitive knowledge, strengthening of character, or initiation into a higher consciousness.

-Paul Brunton

In 2010, the Chilean government was faced with the issue of a collapsed mine and trapped miners. The mine continued to be unstable, and it was unknown whether the miners were dead or alive. Time was of the essence if the miners were to be rescued, and the story attracted global media attention as individuals identified with the trapped miners, the complexity of freeing them, and the drama of their rescue. In these complex crises situations, multiple leaders and diverse stakeholders have to make sense of the uncertain, threatening, urgent situation and quickly act to contain its escalation, minimize damage, and avoid mistakes that can further exacerbate the crisis.

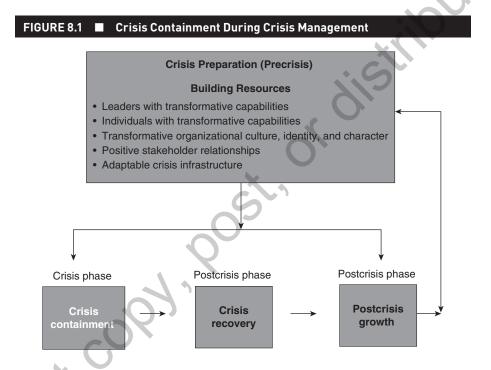
In this chapter, we examine the nature and complexity of crisis containment and how it can be addressed in a constructive and transformative manner. Crisis containment begins once a crisis occurs and ends once it has been resolved. In previous chapters, we discussed the importance of building resources before a crisis. If the resources that were built are effective, they will play a powerful role in the resolution of a crisis. Figure 8.1 illustrates the timing of crisis containment relative to the other phases of transformative crisis management.

In this chapter, we specifically address four questions:

- 1. Why is containing a crisis challenging?
- What is effective crisis containment?

- 3. What are the stages of crisis containment?
- 4. How can leaders effectively contain a crisis?

We will use the case of the 2010 Chilean miners' crisis to illustrate key concepts in this chapter. The case follows. Next, we answer Question 1: Why is containing a crisis challenging?



# THE CHILEAN MINERS' CRISIS

On August 5, 2010, Laurence Golborne, the minister of mining in Chile, received a message that a mine collapse had trapped 33 miners in the San Jose copper-gold mine located in the Atacama Desert. He realized that there was

a potential for grave loss of life and that his country's reputation was at stake. With the support of the president of Chile, Sebastián Piñera, Golborne decided to go to the mine site. On his arrival, he worked closely with the

representatives of the mine owners, the local police, and the rescue teams. There was confusion and uncertainty about how many miners were trapped, how to reach them at a depth of over 2,000 feet, and whether any of the miners were alive. Golborne decided that he would take control of the situation and manage the rescue effort.

Unfortunately, the stability of the mine continued to deteriorate with additional cave-ins. raising concerns about whether the miners were still alive, and if it was safe for them to be rescued. Golborne apprised the miners' families who had also arrived on the site. They were emotional and deeply concerned about the fate of their loved ones and looked to Golborne for answers. Golborne began to organize the rescue effort. He knew he needed a mining expert, someone with more technical expertise than he had. He appointed André Sougarret, a senior engineer at Codelco, a government-owned copper mine, to oversee the drilling effort. Individuals from the Chilean government, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and 20 corporations were all at some point involved in the rescue effort. Golborne and Sougarret created teams to drill down to the collapsed mine using two different pathways. They knew that time was of the essence if they were to rescue the miners who were still alive.

Golborne focused the team on the shared vision of saving the miners, emphasized that transparency was key to maintaining the trust of their key stakeholders, and openness and collaboration were critical for their problem-solving and success. There was a norm of not seeking the limelight for personal gain among the senior leadership. A strong focus on their shared mission enabled the team members to cope during the stress of the rescue effort.

Golborne allowed the experts to explore the technical issues, such as where and how to drill down to the trapped miners, but he facilitated communications between them as they discussed how to reach the trapped miners, asked probing questions, and ensured that they made sound decisions, such as the decision to use a multiple rescue strategy. He also facilitated managerial processes, by appointing other relevant individuals to the team. He appointed a psychologist to work with the family members. The families had created Camp Hope and lived near the site waiting for the rescue of their loved ones. He also appointed the minister of the interior to coordinate with the government. Golborne also had to manage over 1,000 local and international media that had descended on the site. He also removed the mine CEO from being involved in the rescue effort.

The president of Chile continued to provide support to Golborne as they worked on the 2-month project of rescuing the trapped miners. Golborne continually communicated their successes and failures to the families and the media. The ongoing media coverage of the rescue process also resulted in drilling experts from around the world offering their expertise, equipment, and supplies to the rescue effort. Eventually, on August 22, one of the drilling teams was able to bore down to the area where the miners were trapped and received a scrawled message that was taped to the drill that the 33 miners were still alive. There was jubilation with the discovery that the miners were still alive.

However, the team continued to face challenges associated with how to rescue the miners and bring them above ground, provide them with food, and maintain their morale. Nutritionists, staff from NASA, and the psychologists had to work closely to ensure the continued survival of the miners. There were issues concerning diminished levels of Vitamin D, and the need for exercise, sleep, and eye protection to be able to withstand the demands of

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being extracted and rescued. The rescue team drilled tunnels to send food down. The miners were emaciated, but it was also important that they did not eat too much because they needed to be able to fit through the escape tunnel that had to be drilled. Rescuers also devised a means for the trapped miners to communicate with their families. The psychologist controlled the flow of communication between the miners and their families to ensure that they would not be overly stressed by negative news while they were still underground. The team drilled multiple potential pathways to extract the miners and finally one was able to reach them. Rescuers also devised a custom-made

capsule to raise the miners above ground. After 69 days, the 33 miners were brought above ground with the final miner being the supervisor, Luis Urzua, who stated that all the miners had been rescued. Urzua had been key in rationing resources, keeping the trapped miners busy to maintain their morale while they were underground, and in enabling their survival. The story of the rescue of the Chilean miners is one of resilience, courage, excellence, improvisation, collaboration, and leadership among those above and below ground. (Sources for the case: Bonnefoy, 2013; Franklin, 2010, 2011; Nasa.gov, 2015; Useem, Jordan, & Koljatic, 2011)

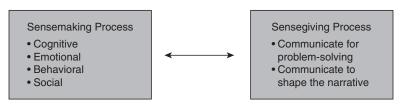
# WHY IS CONTAINING A CRISIS CHALLENGING?

As we have discussed in previous chapters, crises are complex and challenging situations because they are:

- a threat to the survival and goals of the organization and to others within the organizational system;
- urgent situations that if left unresolved can escalate losses;
- ambiguous situations that are uncertain regarding their cause, effects, and means of resolution;
- multidimensional situations with possible technical, legal, economic, human and social, political/reputational, ethical, and natural environmental aspects that need to be managed; and
- opportunities for learning, change, innovation, strengthened relationships, and a positive reputation. Minimizing the damage from the crisis and capitalizing on these opportunities is difficult but important.

In this section, we delve more deeply into the *dynamic aspects* of crises that also contribute to their complexity and make containing them a difficult task. Crises are dynamic because they can change over time. They can increase in intensity and *escalate or be* 

#### FIGURE 8.2 ■ The Sensemaking and Sensegiving Processes During a Crisis



defused. Crises can be defused either because of their natural life cycle, such as during natural disasters, or because they were controlled and contained. Crisis containment involves defusing a crisis and stopping its escalation. The *physical* escalation of a crisis is very visible during crises that cause physical damage, such as natural and technological disasters, terrorist attacks, and workplace violence. For instance, recent natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Harvey and Maria, provided vivid images of water levels rising, the wind blowing with increasing intensity, and the hurricane passing over space and time.

The threat, uncertainty, and urgency associated with a crisis can also trigger several *cognitive*, *emotional*, *behavioral*, and *social dynamics* as various stakeholders strive to cope. These dynamics tend to be less visible than the physical dynamics of a crisis, but they are also important because they can influence its trajectory. Next we discuss these dynamics and how they are associated with two key processes used by individuals as they strive to control and contain a crisis: sensemaking and sensegiving. Figure 8.2 depicts the relationships between these processes, and we discuss each of them.

# The Sensemaking Process

According to Maitlis and Christianson (2014), sensemaking is the process by which individuals seek to understand situations that are confusing, novel, and ambiguous. Some of the dynamics associated with the sensemaking process are highlighted in Table 8.1 and are discussed subsequently.

#### **Cognitive Dynamics**

When individuals are faced with the threat, uncertainty, and ambiguity of a crisis, they cognitively seek to understand the nature of the situation and how to respond. Leaders use their existing mental models or mind-sets to assess the what, when, why, who, and the how associated with a crisis situation. For instance, they need to comprehend and learn the following:

- What: the nature of the crisis and its type, such as product tampering or product defect
- When: its beginnings, that is, when the crisis first occurred
- Why: its causes and why it originated

#### TABLE 8.1 ■ Sensemaking Dynamics During a Crisis

#### 1. Cognitive dynamics

Mental models and mind-sets are used to interpret the situation, and these interpretations can evoke emotions and lead to action

#### 2. Emotional dynamics

Emotions that are evoked can also influence subsequent interpretations and behaviors

#### 3. Behavioral dynamics

Actions are used to problem-solve and to better understand the situation. Actions can defuse or escalate the crisis situation

#### 4. Social dynamics

Multiple stakeholders are involved in sensemaking

- Who: the key stakeholders in the situation, such as those who have power, urgency, and a legitimate claim on the organization
- How: the strategies for crisis resolution

Cognitively making sense of a crisis can enable individuals to reduce its ambiguity and novelty and create order and a structure for explaining the situation. However, these interpretations can differ among individuals because they are shaped by their roles, values, attitudes, motivations, and their organizational and societal cultures. In addition, the mind-sets of others who are participants in their sensemaking can influence which aspects of a situation receive attention and their interpretation of the situation. Complete Case Analysis 8.1.

# CASE ANALYSIS 8.1

- a. During the Chilean miners' crisis, which of the following aspects of the situation did Golborne and his team have to cognitively understand?
  - What: the nature of the crisis and its type
  - When: its beginnings, that is, when the crisis first occurred
  - Why: its causes and why it originated
  - Who: the key stakeholders in the situation, such as those who have power, urgency, and legitimacy
  - How: the strategies for its resolution
- b. Were there differences in sensemaking between Golborne and his team and the families of the miners?

#### **Emotional Dynamics**

Sensemaking is not just a rational logical process, it is also emotional. Based on the nature of the crisis and their experiences, individuals can feel a range of emotions, such as fear, anger, panic, gratitude, or sympathy. In addition, individuals' judgments regarding who is at fault for causing the crisis situation can elicit emotions. According to Weiner (1995), judgments of culpability elicit emotions, such as anger, and an assessment that a target is a victim evokes sympathy toward them. It is important to be aware of the role of emotions during sensemaking because they can have both positive and negative effects. Some of these effects include the following:

- Moderate emotions can focus attention: Individuals rely on their feelings and
  intuitions as they strive to understand situations. Moderate negative emotions,
  such as feeling something is not quite right, can signal to individuals that they
  need to pay attention to the situation (Maitlis, Vogus, & Lawrence, 2013).
- Strong negative emotions can distort thinking: Strong emotions such as fear
  and anxiety can be contagious and lead individuals and groups to quickly
  commit to an explanation of a situation that could be erroneous. In this process,
  they may not be mindful of alternative interpretations (Cornelissen, Mantere, &
  Vaara, 2014).
- Positive emotions can broaden thinking and sustain coping: Positive
  emotions, such as gratitude or interest, can expand and broaden individuals'
  thinking and enable them to be creative and improvise in the crisis situation.
  Further, they can sustain coping by providing respite from the stress of a
  crisis and restore individuals' psychological resources (Folkman, 2008;
  Fredrickson, 2003).

Therefore, emotions can play a powerful role in the sensemaking process, and it is important to be mindful of their effects. Complete Case Analysis 8.2.

# CASE ANALYSIS 8.2

- a. Identify some emotions that were present during the Chilean miners' crisis.
- b. Did any of the following emotional effects occur on individuals' sensemaking?
  - Focusing of attention
  - Distorting thinking
  - Broadening thinking
  - Sustaining coping

#### Behavioral Dynamics

In the ambiguity and urgency of a crisis, individuals may take action to gain additional information and to problem-solve. According to Weick (2010), individuals "think while acting," but such actions can also change the situation by either escalating or defusing the crisis. For example, during the 1982 Johnson & Johnson Tylenol crisis, leaders were able to quickly defuse the situation by recalling the product and by being transparent in their behaviors. Complete Case Analysis 8.3.

# CASE ANALYSIS 8.3

During the Chilean miners' crisis,

- a. How did Golborne and his team make sense of the situation through their actions?
- b. How did their actions change the crisis situation, either by escalating or defusing it?

#### Social Dynamics

Even as individuals seek to understand a situation in their own minds, it is important to note that the sensemaking process is also social. Multiple stakeholders, such as victims, organizational leaders, employees, governmental officials, customers, suppliers, the media, and the public, collectively seek to make sense of a crisis. As a result, individuals rely on the information provided by others to interpret the situation. Complete Case Analysis 8.4. Next, we will examine the sensegiving process.

# CASE ANALYSIS 8.4

a. Who were some of the stakeholders involved in sensemaking during the Chilean miners' crisis?

# The Sensegiving Process

During the uncertainty and ambiguity of crises, individuals and groups after making sense of a crisis also strive to influence the sensemaking of others by sensegiving. They can (a) communicate and provide information for problem-solving and (b) strive to shape the narrative of the what, when, why, who, and how of the crisis. Individuals can seamlessly shift between being sensemaker and sensegiver. However, individuals with more power are better able to influence the sensemaking of others. We discuss these aspects next.

a. How were communication and sensegiving used for problem-solving as Golborne and his team sought to free the trapped miners?

#### Communicate for Problem-Solving

During the heat of the crisis, individuals are involved in problem-solving. In this process, sensegiving and communications play an important role in information sharing, coordination, and in influencing understanding of the cause, effect, and resolution of the crisis (Weick, 2010). For instance, according to Bigley and Roberts (2001), as one leader takes over from another on incident command teams that are used for emergency management, the first leader provides a briefing and brings the new leader up to speed on the facts associated with the situation. In this way, leaders learn and create common ground that is important for coordination and action. Communication is also important for individuals to feel in control as they problem-solve during a crisis. Understanding the "what, when, why, how, and who" in a crisis situation enables them to feel that they can cope (Kovoor-Misra & Olk, 2015). Such sensegiving, however, is only effective if recipients are open to changing their mental models of the crisis situation. Complete Case Analysis 8.5.

#### Shaping the Narrative

Multiple actors have a stake in the sensegiving process. They may strive to shape the narrative or the account of the what, when, how, who, and why of the crisis. For instance, organizational leaders communicate to stakeholders relevant information pertaining to the crisis, governmental agencies report on their findings, activist groups may voice their opposition, the public may communicate its views and provide information on social media, and the traditional media report on stories associated with the crisis. Therefore, the sensegiving process is social and narratives can be contested (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2011) as various stakeholders strive to shape the story about the crisis and communicate their attitudes toward the organization and its leaders. In today's environment, social media play a powerful role in the dissemination of information. Twitter was used by individuals to share information during the 2018 California wildfires, the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and the 2011 uprising in Tunisia (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011). Because of advances in communication technology, the speed of communication can be rapid during a crisis. An outcome of this social sensegiving process is that dominant narratives often emerge that involve casting the key actors in the crisis as victims, heroes, or villains (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2011). Therefore, a key task during crisis management is for organizational leaders to be able to shape the narrative of the crisis by their actions and their communications. Complete Case Analysis 8.6.

During the Chilean miners' crisis:

- a. Who were some stakeholders that were involved in sensegiving and shaping the narrative?
- b. As a dominant narrative emerged, who were the victims, villains, and heroes in the situation?
- c. The United States has an individualistic culture, while Chile's culture is collectivistic. If you were a consultant from the United States who was hired to help Golborne and his team, what would be some cultural nuances that you would consider as you communicated with them? See the Global Insight Box for some ideas.

## **GLOBAL INSIGHT BOX**

#### **CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION STYLES**

Communication styles are the verbal and non-verbal patterns of responding to stimuli. They can be low context or high context in their approach. In a low-context approach, communications tend to be direct and can be taken literally. In a high-context approach, communications are more indirect and need to be understood in their social context.

When individuals use a low-context communication style, much of the information is explicit and transmitted in verbal and nonverbal codes. The communicator is more precise and open in his or her communication. In contrast, when an individual uses a more high-context communication style, the message is more implicit, there are fewer codes, and messages tend to be understated and presented in a more reserved manner. In high-context communications, the message needs to be interpreted by the receiver by understanding the social context of the sender.

Individuals may use both low- and high-context communication styles, but their societal cultures can influence their dominant styles. For instance, individuals in individualistic cultures, because they value autonomy and see themselves as being independent from others, tend to take a more low-context approach. They also tend to talk more and communicate their feelings. In contrast, in more collectivistic cultures, where values of harmony, solidarity, and loyalty to one's family and community are important, individuals see themselves as being interdependent and take a more high-context approach in their communications. They are also more comfortable with silence, and this is a means of communicating disagreement, embarrassment, and truthfulness. Despite a dominant cultural communication style, it is important to be aware in interpreting communications that there are within-culture differences based on subgroup norms and individual differences (see Gudykunst et al., 1996, for a review).

In summary, crisis containment is a challenging task. The cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social dynamics during a crisis are complex and can influence its trajectory. They can be functional and reduce the escalation of a crisis, or they can be

dysfunctional and exacerbate a crisis. In functional situations, they can contribute to crisis containment by enabling leaders to resolve the problem situation, foster learning and improvisation, and shape the narrative of the crisis. However, these dynamics can also impede effective crisis containment if they blind leaders and other key individuals to the early warning signals of a crisis, individuals do not learn and adapt their understanding to the changing realities of a crisis, and they create and accept an erroneous collective narrative that can further escalate the crisis. Next, we answer Question 2: What is effective crisis containment?

# WHAT IS EFFECTIVE CRISIS CONTAINMENT?

The goal of crisis containment is to quickly and constructively contain the threat, limit damage, and maintain or build trust with key stakeholders. In this process, some positive outcomes from effective crisis containment can be attained for organizational members, for the organization as a collective, and for affected stakeholders. Table 8.2 highlights some of these outcomes.

For individuals employed by an organization in crisis, a positive outcome is minimizing damage in a very negative situation. If the task is handled successfully with the values of trustworthy relationships, integrity, courage, and hope (RICH) and resilience, innovation, social responsibility, excellence, and nonstop learning (RISEN), individuals can emerge from the crisis with a greater sense of confidence and learning from handling a difficult situation, strengthened relationships with others involved

TABLE 8.2 ■ Positive Outcomes From Effective Crisis Containment			
Stakeholders	Outcomes		
Individuals within the organization	<ul> <li>Containment of a negative situation</li> <li>Greater sense of mastery and/or learning from the experience</li> <li>Strengthened relationships</li> <li>Greater personal and professional meaningfulness and empowerment to create positive change</li> </ul>		
2. The organization as a collective	<ul> <li>Crisis is contained, and additional losses are restricted</li> <li>Strengthened relationships with stakeholders</li> <li>Pride and hope among employees</li> <li>Greater adaptive capacity</li> <li>An enhanced brand because of their actions during the crisis</li> </ul>		
3. Other affected external stakeholders	<ul> <li>Crisis is contained with reduced losses</li> <li>Resources for coping, recouping losses, and for recovering are available</li> </ul>		

a. Using Table 8.3, identify some positive outcomes that could have been attained by the successful resolution of the Chilean miners' crisis.

in this effort, and an overall greater sense of personal and professional meaningfulness. Similarly, individuals as a collective within the organization can feel successful if they quickly contained a crisis and emerged with a stronger brand, strengthened relationships, and greater adaptive capacity. In addition, those external stakeholders who are affected by a crisis can perceive the crisis containment efforts as effective if the crisis is quickly contained, and they have been compensated for their losses, were treated fairly, and have the resources to recover and move on from the crisis. However, crisis containment efforts may not always be rosy and straightforward and the process can take time. Leaders who are able to more quickly contain a crisis and attain these outcomes for their organizations and their stakeholders will be perceived as being effective in their crisis containment efforts. The 1982 Tylenol crisis competently handled by CEO James Burke and Johnson & Johnson illustrates this point. Complete Case Analysis 8.7. Next, we address Question 3: What are the stages of crisis containment?

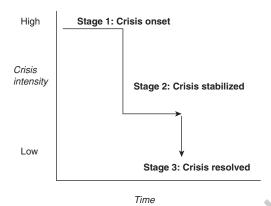
# WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF CRISIS CONTAINMENT?

Based on the intensity of a crisis, three stages of crisis containment can be identified:

- 1. The crisis-onset stage (high intensity): In this stage, the threat, urgency, ambiguity, and stress associated with a crisis are high. Sensemaking and sensegiving are complex, and the physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social dynamics in the situation are intense.
- **2.** The crisis-stabilized stage (moderate intensity): In this stage, the immediate threat of the crisis has been stabilized. In ideal situations, the intensity of the crisis is in decline as negative consequences are being contained.
- **3.** The crisis-resolution stage (low intensity): In this stage, the crisis has been largely resolved; its intensity has declined and is at low levels.

Figure 8.3 provides a simplified and an idealized image of these stages of crisis containment.

#### FIGURE 8.3 ■ Stages of Crisis Intensity



Despite the simplified depiction in Figure 8.3, the crisis intensity levels within each stage can fluctuate, and the evolution and trajectory of a crisis are not always linear or stable. If leaders make mistakes or if a second crisis ensues, the intensity of a crisis can continue to escalate, or in situations of decline, it can revert to higher levels. For instance, the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in 2011 led to damage of the backup generators at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power generation plant. As a result, the intensity of the crisis escalated because two crises now needed to be managed: a natural disaster and a potential technological disaster. To manage in this situation, leaders will need to shift to earlier or later tasks as the intensity of the crisis changes. Complete Case Analysis 8.8. Next, we address Question 4: How can leaders effectively contain a crisis?

# CASE ANALYSIS 8.8

a. To what extent did the intensity of the Chilean miners' crisis follow the trajectory depicted in Figure 8.3?

# HOW CAN LEADERS EFFECTIVELY CONTAIN A CRISIS?

To effectively contain a crisis and accomplish positive outcomes, leaders need to undertake some important steps. To describe the leadership process during crisis containment, we adapt Kotter and Cohen's (2002) eight steps of change leadership to

apply to a crisis situation. As noted by Kotter and Cohen, these steps overlap and the process is not always linear, as leaders may need to revert to a previous step, if necessary. We discuss these steps and their relevance for the various stages of crisis containment next.

## Stage 1: Crisis Onset (High Intensity)

Five important leadership steps are necessary to contain the crisis in Stage 1, which are depicted in Table 8.3.

#### TABLE 8.3 ■ Leadership Steps During the Crisis-Onset Stage of Containment

#### Leadership Steps

#### 1. Recognize the crisis

- Quickly recognize the crisis: Does the situation threaten human life or the environment? Can it tarnish
  the organizational brand? Is there a serious violation of cultural values or laws? Can it affect business
  operations? Does a key stakeholder consider it a crisis?
- Accurately recognize the crisis: Are individuals' assumptions correct, or is there an alternate explanation?

#### 2. Communicate control and provide direction

- Communicate responsibility for containing the crisis (not the cause).
- Communicate "calmness" and your role of taking control of the situation.
- Specify the organization's purpose of minimizing damage from the crisis and containing the situation.
- Emphasize the importance of handling the situation with RICH and RISEN values.
- Express genuine empathy.

#### 3. Organize a response

- · Activate the crisis management team (CMT).
- Identify new members who need to be on the team.
- Diagnose the crisis (type, consequences, cause, and key stakeholders).
- · Specify goals.
- Delegate tasks for resolution.

#### 4. Continually communicate to attract support and buy-in for the vision

- Continually highlight the "shared goal" of containment.
- Use language such as "we" to attract support.
- Express emotions, such as empathy or regret to the stakeholders who are affected.
- Act consistently with RICH and RISEN values through value-centered and intelligent communications.
- Use multiple channels of communication.

#### 5. Empower action

• Remove mental, information, boss, and system barriers.

#### Recognize the Crisis

During problematic, challenging situations, leaders need to assess whether the *level of threat has risen to the potential of a crisis*. In other words, does it have the potential to threaten the survival and goals of the organization? The crisis-onset stage begins once a situation is recognized and judged a crisis by organizational leaders or a key stakeholder. Some triggering events are unambiguously a crisis, such as a terrorist attack or a natural disaster. However, other political/reputational or economic crises need to be recognized and declared a crisis. Research also finds that leaders of organizations in decline are sometimes unable to recognize signals that they are in a crisis (Hambrick & D'Aveni, 1988; Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). In addition, in the early stages of a technological disaster, such as a gas leak or an oil spill, individuals may not recognize its early warning signs because of incorrect assumptions or lack of knowledge. Therefore, the recognition of a crisis can sometimes be complex.

In potentially threatening, ambiguous situations, some barometers that leaders can use to assess the level of threat are the following questions:

- Can the event threaten human life or the environment?
- Can the event tarnish the organizational brand?
- Is there a serious violation of cultural values or laws?
- Can the event significantly affect business operations?
- Do key stakeholders perceive the situation to be a crisis?
- Are our assumptions and rationalizations correct? Are there alternate explanations? How plausible are these explanations?

For example, during the 1982 Johnson & Johnson Tylenol crisis, Burke and his colleagues immediately recognized that the organization was in a crisis when they were notified that there was a potential association between the consumption of Tylenol and some deaths in the Chicago area. They understood that the situation was threatening human life; it could tarnish the organization and the Tylenol brand; there was a threat to their business operations if the capsules were contaminated; and their key stakeholders, such as governmental agencies or their customers, would likely perceive the situation as a crisis. Therefore, they stopped advertising Tylenol to their customers and worked closely with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to understand the cause of the situation. Complete Case Analysis 8.9.

#### Communicate Control and Provide Direction

Once the situation has been recognized as a crisis, the leader needs to provide direction, meaning, and purpose by communicating a transformative vision. The CEO or the

- a. Which of the following were some indicators that enabled Golborne to recognize that the mine collapse was a crisis?
  - Threat to human life or the environment
  - Potential to tarnish the country's brand
  - Violation of cultural values or laws
  - Significant effect on business operations
  - Key stakeholders perceive the situation to be a crisis

most powerful leader of the organization needs to be continually visible, communicate control, and provide an assurance that the organization will be taking responsibility for containing the situation. Having the most powerful leader of the organization visibly in charge of the crisis communicates to key stakeholders that the full weight of the organization is behind the leader's assurances (Argenti, 2002). For instance, Burke took control of the 1982 Tylenol crisis even though it was a product of J & J's subsidiary McNeil Laboratories. While taking control of the situation, however, leaders don't need to acknowledge responsibility for causing the crisis until they can fully investigate the situation. In this way, they can project control, calm, and social responsibility, while protecting the organization from legal liability until they have all the facts. In addition, the leader needs to highlight the importance of minimizing damage (human, physical, relational, and economic) from the crisis and effectively containing the situation. Further, through word and deed, leaders need to communicate the importance of handling the situation with the RICH and RISEN values. They also need to communicate genuine empathy and compassion for those affected by the crisis. Such expressions of empathic support will enhance coping and reduce the stress of those directly and indirectly affected by the crisis.

A transformative vision has four important benefits during a crisis: First, it provides followers with a *mental model* that can enable them to focus on goals and desirable solutions. Leaders who have used a transformative vision and built a positive culture before the crisis can communicate such a vision more quickly during a crisis. For instance, according to CEO John Murphy of Oppenheimer Funds that was affected during the 9/11 attacks, "If you have a strong culture, you have the ability to maintain focus. On 9/11, we had a structure, a belief system, and a hierarchy all in place" (Argenti, 2002). Second, a transformative vision infuses the crisis containment effort with *meaning* that is important to foster coping in its followers. Meaning and purpose evoke *positive emotions* that can sustain coping, renew individuals' psychological resources, foster creativity, and enhance resilience during crises (Folkman, 2008; Fredrickson, 2003; Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003). Third, a transformative vision can *motivate* individuals because leaders

How effectively did Golborne communicate control and provide direction during the Chilean miners' crisis. Did he do the following?

- a. Take responsibility for containing the crisis situation
- b. Communicate a transformative vision that had a moral purpose
- c. Specify the values for behavior
- d. Express empathy in his communications
- e. Behave as an ethical leader (see the Ethical Insight Box)

## **ETHICAL INSIGHT BOX**

#### ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Ethical leaders can be powerful role models for ethical behaviors in their organizations. As moral individuals, they are honest, fair, respectful, and have integrity. Further, as moral managers, they follow laws, are willing to hold accountable those who violate ethical norms, and consider what is best for their organizations and their followers.

Ethical leaders have an impact on their followers because they serve as role models. They are perceived as attractive and credible, and they attract their followers' attention. Also, since their behaviors are observable, they can

be emulated. In addition, ethical leaders promote ethical awareness. They draw attention to both current and future ethically charged issues. Finally, ethical leaders foster ethical judgment. They influence the interpretation of ethical issues by discussing them with their followers and providing consequences for behaviors that foster learning. Therefore, individuals who work for ethical leaders tend to judge deviant behaviors more harshly, and they demonstrate more prosocial behaviors than do those who work for less ethical leaders (Resick, Hargis, Shao, & Dust, 2013).

who provide a collective focus, a moral justification, and communicate faith and hope tend to be perceived by their followers as charismatic (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004). Finally, a transformative vision can *encourage courageous principled collective action* during a crisis. For example, a moral purpose of protecting property and saving the lives of others on the ground instigated collective action among the passengers of Flight 93 during the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Quinn & Worline, 2008). Complete Case Analysis 8.10.

#### Organize a Response

To organize a response, leaders need to *activate and build their crisis management teams*, *diagnose the crisis*, *specify concrete goals*, *and delegate tasks*. They need to see whether new members, such as experts, are required on the team, and members of the team

How effectively did Golborne organize a response to contain the Chilean miners' crisis? Did he do the following?

- a. Build a crisis management team
- b. Diagnose the crisis
- c. Specify concrete goals
- d. Delegate tasks

need to be tasked with diagnosing the situation and containing damage. For instance, team members need to diagnose the what, when, why, who, and how of the crisis and specify tasks that need to be delegated; the leader needs to coordinate these activities. In this process, leaders and team members need to be cognizant of their sensemaking and sensegiving and be able to update their mental models as the situation evolves (Waller, Lei, & Pratten, 2014). In the Tylenol tampering situation, Burke worked closely with leaders of McNeil Laboratories, his medical director, the FBI, and the FDA. However, he also understood that a larger coalition of individuals consisting of loyal customers and positive public perceptions were important to overcoming the crisis. Therefore, his team was tasked with identifying the batch numbers of the contaminated capsules, the extent to which other capsules in the batch were contaminated, and if they had cyanide in the plants that produced the capsules, informing health-care professionals of the problem and potential dangers, exchanging Tylenol capsules with caplets, and conducting surveys to assess public opinion of Tylenol (Tedlow & Smith, 2005). These crisis-responsive leadership tasks are important for containing the negative situation, and they contribute to the leader being perceived as charismatic during a crisis (Hunt, Boal, & Dodge, 1999). Complete Case Analysis 8.11.

## Continually Communicate to Attract Support

While leaders are working on resolving the crisis, they also need to *continually communicate through words and deeds* in a manner that attracts internal and external support for the organization and buy-in for the vision. Such communication efforts are important, as leaders need to rely on others in their environment for help in containing the crisis. Leaders who use rhetoric that highlights the following tend to be perceived as charismatic and can attract identification and support (Bligh et al., 2004; Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994):

- A collective focus and identity
- High-performance expectations for their followers and belief in their abilities
- A message of hope and faith

Therefore, during a crisis, leaders can continually communicate and highlight the shared goals of crisis containment among various stakeholder groups; the RICH and RISEN transformative values of trustworthy relationships, integrity, courage, hope, resilience, innovation, social responsibility, excellence, and nonstop learning; their performance expectations of their followers; and their belief in their abilities. Such communication needs to occur using both traditional and social media channels. In addition, since language is important in fostering collective action, leaders can use terms such as we to include others in the crisis containment effort. For example, on Flight 93 during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, once the passengers started referring to themselves as "we," they started formulating collective action about how to apprehend the hijackers. This process transformed them "from individual victims to a collective actor" because it highlighted their shared fate (Quinn & Worline, 2008).

In this process, leaders also need to be sensitive to their stakeholders' attributions of their roles in the crisis, and different strategies need to be used to address these perceptions. To understand these attributions, leaders need to track stories of the organization and the crisis in both the mainstream and social media. Once they are able to assess the attitudes and emotions of their key stakeholders, leaders need to quickly respond to their perceptions and judgments of the organization's role in the situation. For instance, in situations of blame, leaders can use more accommodative strategies, such as apologies and compensation (Coombs, 2007), and communicate emotions, such as shame, regret, and empathy (Thiel, Griffith, & Connelly, 2015; Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014), to acknowledge the costs imposed on those affected by the crisis. However, if leaders are honestly convinced that their organization is not responsible for causing the crisis, they can deny responsibility and provide justifications to support their position (Coombs, 2007). Even in these situations, however, they need to be socially responsible and contribute to containing the situation. For instance, even though Burke of Johnson & Johnson knew that his organization was not culpable in the deaths of poisoned individuals during the 1982 Tylenol crisis, Johnson & Johnson took action to prevent future deaths by being one of the first companies to respond to FDA requirements after the tampering and developed a new tamper-resistant packaging for its Tylenol products (Tedlow & Smith, 2005).

An important guideline during crisis communication is to not be manipulative in shaping a narrative but to instead use a *value-centered intelligent approach (VIA)*. Value-centered communications involve acting consistently with one's principles and values. In addition, intelligent communication involves using one's cognitive, emotional, ethical, social, political, and cultural intelligence in decision-making and in constructing and communicating messages. Such a value-centered, intelligent approach is critical because both internal and external stakeholders will judge the communications of an organization's leaders by observing their words and deeds. The genuineness of their leaders' intentions is very important to followers, and perceptions of inauthenticity can

How effectively did Golborne communicate and attract support during the Chilean miners' crisis? Did he do the following?

- Attract the support of his team by providing a collective focus, and by communicating high performance expectations, hope, and faith
- b. Attract the support of external stakeholders by behaving consistently with expressed principles and values and by using multiple intelligence

have significant negative effects on their relationships in the long-term (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002). In addition, a VIA approach can enable leaders to balance self, relational, and collective interests in their decision-making and communications with key stakeholders. Complete Case Analysis 8.12.

#### **Empower Action**

Finally, the fifth leadership step in the crisis-onset stage is to empower others. Leaders need to remove various barriers, such as mind barriers that the problem is too big to handle; system or bureaucratic barriers by enabling a quick response and by providing access to resources; the boss barrier or individuals in power who are reluctant to act consistently with the vision; and information barriers where individuals lack the necessary knowledge to handle the situation (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). For example, during the Tylenol crisis, Burke empowered his employees to contain the situation by providing them with the necessary information, by communicating his belief that Tylenol could regain much of its market share, and by encouraging his employees to problem-solve and innovate and develop a new tamper-resistant packaging. Complete Case Analysis 8.13.

# CASE ANALYSIS 8.13

How quickly did Golborne empower action during the Chilean miners' crisis? Did he do the following?

- a. Build confidence and support in his followers
- b. Provide information regularly to all stakeholders
- c. Decentralize task decision-making to experts
- d. Provide the necessary financial support

In summary, during the crisis-onset stage, leaders need to persist with the five steps until the urgency and the intensity of the crisis declines and has been stabilized. Next, leaders can move on to Stage 2 of crisis containment: The crisis stabilized stage.

# Stage 2: Crisis Stabilized (Moderate Crisis Intensity)

Once the crisis escalation has been controlled, leaders have two important steps to complete. They are highlighted in Table 8.4.

#### Communicate Short-Term Wins

Once the crisis has been stabilized, leaders can communicate the short-term wins and the progress that has been made. Such communications alert and update key stakeholders that the threat is being controlled. For stakeholders to perceive that an area of progress is a "win," it needs to be perceived as meaningful, visible, and unambiguously a "win" by them (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). For instance, during the 1982 Tylenol crisis, Burke communicated to the public that the crisis was localized to Chicago, that they knew the batch numbers of the contaminated capsules, and that no new deaths had occurred from contaminated Tylenol capsules. Perceiving the progress that has been made increases individuals' feelings of being in control, which is critical for coping during a crisis and enables them to be resilient.

#### TABLE 8.4 Leadership Steps During the Crisis Stabilized and Resolution Stages

#### Leadership steps: Crisis stabilized stage

- 1. Communicate short-term wins:
  - Regularly communicate progress to stakeholders through all relevant channels.
- 2. Don't let up until the resolution of the crisis:
  - Keep doing the following steps until the crisis has been resolved:
    - o Communicate control and the transformative vision and values.
    - o Communicate to attract support.
    - Build the CMT.
    - o Delegate tasks to limit damage, diagnose cause, and develop resolution strategies.
    - o Empower action.
    - o Communicate short-term wins.
    - o Manage stress and burnout.

#### Leadership tasks (crisis resolution stage)

- 3. Communicate and celebrate the resolution of the crisis:
  - Communicate that crisis is over, but be careful that "Mission Accomplished" is not declared too soon.
  - Use media and images to communicate resolution.

#### Don't Let Up

Leaders also need to ensure that the *momentum does not let up* until the crisis is over. In this process, they need to continually communicate control, keep the transformative vision and values front and center, ensure continued stakeholder support, coordinate and build the team if new expertise is necessary, continue to diagnose the causes and effects of the crisis, execute strategies for resolution, empower action and remove barriers, and communicate short-term wins. For example, during the 1982 Tylenol crisis, Burke did not let up until a tamper-resistant packaging was developed.

In addition, leaders need to manage their own and their followers' psychological and physical resources to ensure that they don't experience burnout (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). A useful metaphor for understanding the stamina and the capacity required during a crisis is that of the "athlete." Just as athletes need to perform at high levels under stress, during a crisis, leaders need to be able to perform at optimal levels. According to Loehr and Schwartz (2001), during optimal performance individuals are sufficiently activated (not overly threatened or complacent), mindful, and open to improvisation and creativity. To maintain this mental state, Loehr and Schwartz suggest that individuals have short recovery breaks, of even a few minutes, between periods of high levels of performance to be able to regroup and regain equilibrium. For instance, tennis athletes take the time between points during their matches to recalibrate and refocus themselves. They need to balance their mental, emotional, spiritual (values), and physical resources and ensure that their energy expenditure does not exceed their capacity and lead to burnout. Folkman (2008) also suggests that individuals use meaning-focused coping strategies. Such strategies involve perceiving one's contributions as being meaningful and being adaptive and able to change one's goals, processes, and priorities based on the demands of the situation. These self-managing strategies can foster feelings of being in control and sustain coping by generating positive emotions, such as pride in purpose and association with the organization, a sense of accomplishment, affection for coworkers, and compassion for the victims of the crisis. Such efforts are important because the equilibrium and performance of organizational leaders, and some of their critical followers can affect the trajectory of the crisis. Once the crisis has been resolved, leaders can move to the final stage of crisis containment: The crisis resolution stage. Complete Case Analysis 8.14.

# CASE ANALYSIS 8.14

During the Chilean miners' crisis, how effectively did Golborne do the following?

- a. Communicate short-term wins
- b. Manage the don't let up step

#### Stage 3: Crisis Resolution (Low Crisis Intensity)

#### Communicate Crisis Resolution

Once the threat is past and the crisis has been contained, leaders can signal closure and the end of the crisis. However, they need to be careful that they don't signal resolution too soon. For instance, President George W. Bush drew criticism when, in 2003 during the Iraq War, he declared prematurely, "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended" with a "Mission Accomplished" banner hanging behind him. This statement was premature as the war dragged on for another 8 years. An early call for closure can communicate that the leader is out of touch with the reality of the situation. Therefore, just as recognizing the beginning of a crisis is complex, often recognizing the end of crisis containment is just as complex. A good benchmark is to be aware of the facts of the crisis, such as whether its damaging effects have been contained, and the perceptions of the organization's key stakeholders. For instance, during the 1982 Tylenol crisis, only after the FBI cleared Johnson & Johnson of any culpability for the tampered capsules, no new tampered capsules were reported, and a tamper-resistant packaging had been developed could Burke signal that the crisis containment phase was over. It is important to note that a declaration that crisis resolution is over only signals that the crisis containment phase has been completed. For effective crisis management, organizations still need to complete the crisis recovery and growth phases. For instance, Johnson & Johnson still had to recover its lost market share and regain its equilibrium postcrisis. We discuss these issues in the following chapters. Complete Case Analysis 8.15 and Experiential Exercise 8.1.

# CASE ANALYSIS 8.15

a. When was crisis resolution communicated in the case of the Chilean miners' crisis?

# EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE 8.1

Use the Leadership Assessment exercise provided at the end of this chapter to evaluate how effective you, or another leader, were in containing a crisis.

# CONCLUSION

Crisis containment is a complex and challenging task. It occurs in the context of threat, urgency, ambiguity, emotions, stress, potential opportunities, and physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social dynamics. Leaders play a critical role by providing

direction, organizing and motivating a response, contributing to problem-solving, and building positive relationships and bridges between their organization and its key stakeholders. Considering the catastrophic consequences of many forms of organizational crises, this is a task that they must accomplish under great strain and pressure. Those leaders who have built their capacities before a crisis are more likely to be able to effectively rise to the occasion during a crisis. The stakes are high for leaders during a crisis because those who can effectively steward their organizations through the storm represented by a crisis are often labeled as heroes, but others who are less successful are vilified as villains. Therefore, a crisis is a test of the character and capacity of leaders and their organizations.

#### **Crisis Leadership Assessment**

Reflecting on a personal or an organizational crisis, evaluate how effectively you, or another leader, were in leading the crisis containment effort. Make your assessment, using a scale of 1–5 (where 1 = *strongly disagree*, 3 = *somewhat agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*).

Leadership Steps	Score
1. Effectively Recognized the Crisis	
a. Quickly recognized the crisis.	
b. Accurately recognized the nature of the threat.	
c. Communicated the recognition of the crisis to key stakeholders.	
d. Used relevant channels in communicating that a crisis had occurred.	
Step 1 Score	
2. Communicated Control and Provided Direction	
a. Communicated responsibility for containing the crisis (not for the cause).	
b. Communicated "calmness" and an attitude of taking control of the situation.	
c. Specified the moral purpose of minimizing damage from the crisis and containing the situation with excellence and integrity.	
d. Communicated genuine empathy and compassion for those affected by the crisis.	
Step 2 Score	
3. Organized a Response	
a. Activated the CMT and added new members who were necessary.	
b. Diagnosed the crisis (type, consequences, cause, and key stakeholders).	
c. Specified concrete goals.	

d. Delegated tasks for resolution.	
Step 3 Score	
4. Continually Communicated to Attract and Maintain Support	
a. Continually highlighted the "shared goal" of containment.	
b. Used relevant channels of communication to reach various stakeholders.	XO
c. Expressed emotions, such as empathy or regret to the stakeholders who were affected.	<b>)</b>
<ul> <li>d. Acted consistently with trustworthy relationships, integrity, courage, and hope (RICH) and resilience, innovation, social responsibility, excellence, and nonstop learning (RISEN) values.</li> </ul>	
Step 4 Score	
5. Empowered Action	
a. Removed mental barriers by encouraging individuals that they could contain the crisis.	
<ul> <li>Addressed the problem of individuals with power who were impeding crisis containment.</li> </ul>	
c. Addressed barriers associated with lack of information that were impeding crisis containment.	
<ul> <li>d. Addressed barriers associated with technology, structure, culture, policies, procedures, and resources during crisis containment.</li> </ul>	
Step 5 Score	
6. Communicated Short-Term Wins	
a. Identified concrete goals that were more easily attainable to generate momentum and support for crisis containment.	
b. Regularly communicated progress that was meaningful to stakeholders.	
c. Regularly communicated progress to all key stakeholders.	
d. Used all relevant channels to communicate progress.	
Step 6 Score	
7. Didn't Let Up Until Crisis Resolution	
a. Persisted with tasks until crisis resolution.	
b. Addressed the difficult problems associated with crisis resolution.	
c. Used various means to keep individuals focused on crisis containment.	

(Continued)

#### (Continued)

d. Enabled individuals to manage their stress and burnout so that they could be effective during crisis containment.	
Step 7 Score	
8. Signaled Crisis Resolution	
a. Communicated that the crisis was over to key stakeholders.	**
b. Accurately recognized the resolution of the crisis.	
c. Used relevant communication strategies to communicate resolution of the crisis.	
d. Provided closure for the end of the crisis but motivated individuals that more work remained for recovery and growth.	
Step 8 Score	
Overall Leadership Total Score (Sum of all the eight total scores)	

# **Interpreting Your Score**

- a. A score of 128–160 on the Overall Leadership Total Score indicates that you believe that you or another leader was effective in containing the crisis.
- c. A score of 96–127 on the Overall Leadership Total Score indicates that you believe that you or another leader was somewhat effective in containing the crisis.
- d. A score of less than 96 on the Overall Leadership Total Score indicates that you believe that you or another leader could have been more effective in containing the crisis.
- e. Identify the highest two scores among the Total Scores of the eight steps. They indicate some areas of strengths in effectively containing a crisis.
- f. Identify the lowest two scores among the Total Scores of the eight steps. They indicate some potential areas for improvement in effectively containing a crisis.

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